

Missing Kissinger Etgar Keret

Missing Kissinger: An Etgar Keret Story

Etgar Keret, the renowned Israeli author, masterfully navigates the complexities of human existence in his short stories. His works are imbued with a unique blend of surrealism, humor, and poignant observations on the human condition. In "Missing Kissinger," Keret delves into the absurdity of war and the uncanny nature of memory, leaving the reader with a lingering sense of unease and philosophical reflection.

Synopsis

The story follows a man, unnamed, who receives a series of unexpected phone calls from a mysterious woman claiming to be his ex-wife. The woman's voice sounds familiar yet different, her speech laced with a strange, chillingly cheerful tone. As the calls continue, she delivers cryptic messages about missing items – a photograph of the man's grandmother, a book of poetry, and finally, the most peculiar one: "Missing Kissinger."

Confused and bewildered, the man attempts to rationalize the situation, but the calls persist, each one leaving him with a growing sense of unease. The woman's claims become increasingly outlandish, blurring the lines between reality and imagination. She speaks of a missing war, a forgotten love, and an elusive truth hidden within the depths of their past.

Analysis

The Absurdity of War: Keret masterfully uses the seemingly mundane object, "Kissinger," to symbolize the absurdity of war and its impact on individual lives. Kissinger, a prominent figure in American foreign policy, is often associated with the Vietnam War, a conflict that left a lasting scar on the collective psyche. By making Kissinger a "missing" item, Keret highlights the intangible, yet profound, effects of war, which can manifest in unexpected ways, even haunting the memories of those who weren't directly involved.

The Unreliable Narrator and the Nature of Memory: The story is narrated from the perspective of the man, whose perception of reality is gradually eroded by the woman's increasingly bizarre claims. The unreliable narrator trope creates a sense of ambiguity and confusion, mirroring the fragmented nature of memory and the fallibility of human perception.

The Uncanny and the Power of Suggestion: Throughout the story, Keret skillfully employs the

uncanny, a feeling of unease that arises from the unsettlingly familiar. The woman's voice, familiar yet distorted, and her cryptic messages, both mundane and surreal, create a disquieting atmosphere that leaves the reader constantly questioning what is real and what is imagined. This feeling of unease is amplified by the power of suggestion, as the woman's words subtly manipulate the man's own memories and beliefs, blurring the line between reality and fantasy.

Themes of Loss, Love, and Identity: The story explores the themes of loss, love, and identity, all of which are intertwined with the overarching theme of war and its repercussions. The missing objects, the missing war, and the missing Kissinger all symbolize the lingering impact of the past on the present, and how these experiences shape our identity and our understanding of love and loss.

The Elusive Truth: The story doesn't offer a definitive answer to the mystery of the missing items or the true nature of the woman's calls. Instead, it leaves the reader with a lingering sense of unease, prompting them to ponder the questions raised by the narrative. The ambiguity allows for multiple interpretations and encourages the reader to engage with the story on a deeper level, exploring the complexities of memory, reality, and the human condition.

Conclusion

"Missing Kissinger" is a quintessential Etgar Keret story, a masterfully crafted narrative that blends surrealism, humor, and profound observation into a deeply affecting piece of literary art. By exploring the absurdity of war, the unreliable nature of memory, and the unsettling power of the uncanny, Keret forces the reader to confront the fragility of truth, the complexity of human relationships, and the enduring impact of the past on our present. The story lingers in the mind long after the final page, leaving a lasting impression on the reader and prompting them to question the very nature of reality.

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